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MR. STONE'S

ELECTION-SERMON,

MAY 10th, 1792.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED BEFORE HIS EXCELLENCY

SAMUEL HUNTINGTON, Esq. L.L.D.

GOVERNOR,

AND THE HONORABLE THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

STATE OF *CONNECTICUT*,

CONVENED AT HARTFORD, ON THE DAY OF THE ANNIVERSARY ELECTION.

MAY 10th, 1792.

BY TIMOTHY STONE, A. M.

PASTOR OF A CHURCH IN LEBANON.

PRINTED AT *HARTFORD*,

BY HUDSON AND GOODWIN,

MDCCXCII.

A SERMON.

At a General Assembly of the State of Connecticut, holden at Hartford, in said State, on the second Thursday of May, A. D. 1792.

ORDERED, That the Hon. WILLIAM WILLIAMS, and Mr. ELKANAH TISDALE, return the Thanks of this Assembly to the Rev. TIMOTHY STONE, for his Sermon delivered before this Assembly at the General Election on the 10th of May instant, and desire a Copy of the same that it may be printed.

A true Copy of Record.
Examined, by
GEORGE WYLLYS, Sec'y.

ELECTION SERMON.

DEUTERONOMY IV. 5, 6.

Behold, I have taught you ſtatutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye ſhould do ſo in the land whether ye go to poſſeſs it.

Keep therefore, and do them; for this is your wiſdom and your underſtanding in the ſight of the nations, which ſhall hear all theſe ſtatutes, and ſay, Surely this great nation is a wiſe and underſtanding people.

WE are not left in doubt, concerning the wiſdom and ſalutary nature of that conſtitution under which the Hebrews were placed, as it proceeded immediately from GOD; and, in reference to the particular circumſtances of that people, was the reſult of unerring perfection. It was a free conſtitution, in which,

all the valuable rights of the community were moſt happily ſecured. The public good, was the great object in view, and, the moſt effectual care was taken to preſerve the rights of individuals. Proper rewards were promiſed to the obedient, and righteous puniſhments allotted for the diſobedient. GOD deſigned, for ſpecial reaſons, that the ſeed of Abraham, ſhould be diſtinguiſhed in a peculiar manner from all other nations; he therefore undertook the government of them himſelf, in all matters reſpecting religion, civil policy, and that military eſtabliſhment, which he ſaw to be neceſſary for their happineſs and defence. We find Moſes, who received this conſtitution from GOD, and delivered it to his people, frequently exhorting them, to maintain a ſacred regard for this divine inſtitution, and to pay a conſcientious obedience to all its laws: in doing of which, they might ſecure to themſelves national proſperity, and enjoy, the unfailing protection of Almighty GOD.

To deter them from diſobedience, he called up their attention to that ſolemn ſcene which opened to their view, when they ſtood before the LORD their GOD in Horeb: when there were thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; ſo that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And the LORD commanded, ſaying, *gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they ſhall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.*

For the LORD *thy* GOD, *is a conſuming fire, even a jealous* GOD.

THE argument made uſe of in the text, to excite in that people, a ſpirit of obedience to their conſtitution and laws, was this, that it would raiſe their character in the ſight of the nations: who from thence would be led, to entertain a veneration for them, as a great nation, a wiſe and underſtanding people. This ſacred paſſage, in connection with the important occaſion, which hath called us to the houſe of GOD, this morning, may direct our attention to the following enquiry.

IN what, doth the true wiſdom of a people, a civil community, conſiſt?

THE general anſwer to this queſtion, may not be difficult; it will no doubt, be readily admitted, that the higheſt wiſdom of a community of intelligent beings, muſt conſiſt, in purſuing that line of conduct, which ſhall have the moſt direct and ſure tendency to promote the beſt good of the whole, both in time, and eternity. What ever creatures, may conceive to be a good, either, through imperfection of underſtanding, or degeneracy of heart; yet, if that which they call good, is inſeparably connected with more pain than pleaſure, taking in the whole of their exiſtence; then it cannot with propriety be ſtyled good, certainly not the beſt good, conſequently wiſdom will not chooſe it. The province of wiſdom, is, to diſcover and elect the moſt valuable objects; and, to adopt the beſt means to obtain them. Theſe

obſervations, apply with equal force, to individuals, and communities; to all claſſes of men, whether in the higher, or, lower walks of life. Communities, moſt certainly, as well as individuals, under the guidance of wiſdom, will purſue that conduct which ſhall be productive of their higheſt happineſs, in every period of their exiſtence. But the queſtion returns, what is that conduct, which ſhall have the deſired tendency, and will effect the higheſt good? This queſtion, as it reſpects mankind at large in their preſent ſtate, might admit, a great variety of anſwers: ſome of which, may demand particular notice on the preſent occaſion. As,

1. WISDOM will direct a community, to eſtabliſh a good ſyſtem of government. It may be a queſtion, whether the allwiſe GOD ever deſigned, that any of his intelligent creatures, even in a ſtate of perfection, ſhould exiſt without ſome kind of government, and ſubordination amongſt themſelves. All creatures, have not the ſame capacities; neither are they placed under equal advantages; and, if thoſe may be found, whoſe capacities are equally extenſive, ſtill they are different; and ſeem to be deſigned for different purpoſes, and ſtations, in the great ſyſtem. We read, of thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers amongſt the angelic hoſts: which titles, denote various ſtations among thoſe ſinleſs beings, that they are differently employed, in degrees of ſubordination to each other, in the government of that holy family of which, GOD, is the father. But, however this may be, as our acquaintance with that world of glory, is very imperfect—

yet it is beyond a doubt, that government was deſigned, and is abſolutely neceſſary for men on earth, in their preſent ſtate of degeneracy.

CREATURES, who have riſen in rebellion, againſt the holy and perfect government of JEHOVAH; have partial connections, ſelfiſh intereſts, paſſions and luſts, which often interfere with each other, and which, will not always be controlled by reaſon, and the mild influence of moral motives, however great: but theſe in their external expreſſions, muſt be under the reſtraint of law, or there can be no peace, no ſafety among men. Some kind of government, is therefore indiſpenſibly neceſſary for the happineſs of mankind, that they may partake of the ſecurity, and other important bleſſings reſulting from ſociety; which cannot be enjoyed in a ſtate of nature. Without any conſideration, of the various forms of government which have been adopted, in different ages and countries; that, may be the beſt for a particular people, which in the view of all their circumſtances, affords the faireſt proſpect of promoting righteouſneſs, and of ſecuring the moſt valuable privileges of the community, in its adminiſtration.

CIVIL liberty is one of the moſt important bleſſings which men poſſeſs of a temporal nature, the moſt valuable inheritance on this ſide heaven. That conſtitution may therefore be eſteemed the beſt, which doth moſt effectually ſecure this treaſure to a community. That liberty conſiſts in freedom from reſtraint, leav-

ing each one to act as ſeemeth right to himſelf, is a moſt unwiſe miſtaken apprehenſion. Civil liberty, conſiſts in the being and adminiſtration of ſuch a ſyſtem of laws, as doth bind all claſſes of men, rulers and ſubjects, to unite their exertions for the promotion of virtue and public happineſs. That happy conſtitution enjoyed by the Hebrews, of which, the Supreme Lawgiver was the immediate author, was no other, than a ſyſtem of good laws, and righteous ſtatutes: which limited the powers and prerogatives of magiſtrates, deſignated the duties of ſubjects, and obliged each to that obedience to law, and exchange of ſervices, which tended to mutual benefit.† "And what nation is there ſo great, that hath ſtatutes and judgments ſo righteous, as all this law which I ſet before you this day." A ſtate of ſociety neceſſarily implies reciprocal dependence in all its members; and rational government, is deſigned to realize and ſtrengthen this dependance, and to render it, in ſuch ſenſe equal in all ranks, from the ſupreme magiſtrate, to the meaneſt peaſant, that each one may feel himſelf bound to ſeek the good of the whole: when individuals do this, whether rulers or ſubjects, they have a juſt right to expect the favor and protection of the whole body. The laws of a ſtate, ſhould equally bind every member, whether his ſtation be the moſt conſpicuous, or, the moſt obſcure. Rulers in a righteous government, are as really under the controul of law, as the meaneſt ſubject: and the one equally with the other, ſhould be ſubjected to puniſhment, when ever he becomes criminal, by a violation of the law. Re-

† Deut. iv. 8.

wards and puniſhments, ſhould be equally diſtributed to all, agreeably to real merit or demerit, without reſpect of perſons. A conſtitution, founded upon the general and immutable laws of righteouſneſs and benevolence, and correſponding to their particular circumſtances, will therefore become a primary object with a wiſe and underſtanding people.

2. The wiſdom of a people will appear, in their united exertions to ſupport ſuch a ſyſtem of government, in its regular adminiſtration.

Enacting ſalutary laws, diſcovers the wiſdom and good deſign of legiſlators: but the liberty and happineſs of the community, eſſentially depend upon their regular execution. The beſt code of laws can anſwer no good purpoſes, any further than it is executed. Every member in ſociety is bound, in duty to the community, himſelf, and poſterity, to uſe his endeavours that the laws of the ſtate be carried into execution.

Laws, point out the exiſting offices, relations and dependancies of the community: they ſerve for the direction, ſupport and defence of all characters; but conſidered as reſtraints, they more eſpecially reſpect the unruly members.† "Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawleſs and diſobedient, for the ungodly and for ſinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers, and murderers of mothers, for manſlayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themſelves with mankind, for liars, for perjured perſons,

† 1. Tim. i. 9, 10.

and if there be any other thing that is contrary to ſound doctrine." It is unreaſonable to expect, that the vices of man which are inimical to ſociety, will be reſtrained by ſilent laws exiſting upon paper: they muſt be carried into execution, and be known to have an active exiſtence, that ſuch as contemn the law, may not only read, but feel the reſentment of the community.

It is not within the reach of human underſtanding, to look with preciſion into futurity, to diſcover all the circumſtances and contingencies which may take place among a people: neither is it certain, that every perſon who may poſſeſs a fair character for ability and integrity, and who may be called into public life, will be governed in all his actions, by public and diſintereſted motives. Through neceſſary imperfection, or corrupt deſign, ſtatutes may be enacted, which may not prove ſalutary in their execution; but greatly prejudicial to the common good: hence ariſeth the neceſſity of alterations and amendments, in all human ſyſtems.

Changes however, ſhould be few as poſſible; for the ſtrength and reputation of government, doth not a little depend upon the uniformity and ſtability obſerved in its adminiſtration. Laws while they remain ſuch, ought to be executed, when found to be uſeleſs or hurtful, they may be repealed: to have laws in force and not executed, or to obſtruct the natural courſe of law in a free ſtate, muſt be dangerous; will have many hurtful tendencies, will greatly weaken government, and render all the intereſts of the community inſecure. Liberty, property and

life, are all precarious, in a ſtate where laws ceaſe in their execution. When known breaches of law paſs with impunity, and open tranſgreſſors go unpuniſhed; when executive officers grow remiſs in their duty, eſpecially, when they connive at diſobedience: all diſtinctions betwixt virtue and vice will vaniſh, authority will ſink into diſrepute, and government will be trampled in the duſt—for which reaſons, with others that might be named, it muſt be the wiſdom, the indiſpenſible duty of all characters in ſociety, to unite their exertions, for the ſupport of righteous laws, in their regular adminiſtration. As it would be exceedingly unreaſonable to expect, that any people, can ever realize the benefits of good government, under a weak, or a wicked adminiſtration—in which, perſons deſtitute of abilities, or, of ſtable principles of righteouſneſs and goodneſs, fill the various departments of the ſtate. Hence,

3. The wiſdom of a people will appear in the election of good rulers.

The peace and happineſs of communities, have a neceſſary dependance, under God, upon the character and conduct of thoſe who are called to the adminiſtration of government. A bad conſtitution, under the direction of wiſe and pious rulers, who have capacity to diſcern, diſpoſition and reſolution to purſue the public good, may become a bleſſing; being made to ſubſerve many valuable purpoſes. But the beſt conſtitution, committed to rulers of a contrary deſcription, may be ſubverted; or ſo abuſed, as to become a curſe: and be rendered

productive of the moſt miſchievous conſequences. The underſtanding, or folly, of a people in reference to their temporal intereſts, is in nothing more conſpicuous, than in the choice of civil rulers. In free ſtates the body of electors have it in their power to be governed well; if faithful to themſelves and the public, in raiſing thoſe to offices of truſt and importance, who are poſſeſſed of abilities and have merited their confidence by former good ſervices.

KNOWLEDGE and fidelity, are qualifications indiſpenſibly neceſſary to form the character of good magiſtrates. No man, ever poſſeſſed natural or acquired abilities, too great for the diſcharge of the duties conſtantly incumbent upon thoſe, who act as the repreſentatives of the Moſt High GOD, in the government of their fellow creatures: multitudes however well diſpoſed, are totally incapable of ſuch truſt. The intereſts of ſociety are always important, they are many times involved in extreme difficulty, through the weakneſs of ſome, and the wickedneſs of others; and there is need of the moſt extenſive knowledge, wiſdom and prudence, to direct the various oppoſing intereſts of individuals into one channel, and guide them all to a ſingle object, the public good. Wo to that people, to whom GOD by his providence in judgment ſhall ſay; "I will give children to be their princes, and babes ſhall rule over them. And the people ſhall be oppreſſed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour: the child ſhall behave himſelf proudly againſt the antient, and the baſe againſt the honourable. And judgment is turned away backward, and juſtice ſtandeth afar off: for truth is fallen in

the ſtreet and equity cannot enter; and he that departeth from evil maketh himſelf a prey." †

But knowledge alone, will qualify no perſon to fill a public ſtation with honor to himſelf, or advantage to others. The greateſt abilities the moſt extenſive knowledge are capable of abuſe; and when miſapplied to ſelfiſh ambitious purpoſes, may be improved to the deſtruction of every thing valuable in ſociety.

Fidelity therefore, is another eſſential characteriſtic in a good ruler. This is a qualification ſo abſolutely eſſential, that *when known to be wanting*, no conceivable abilities can atone for its abſence. Fidelity hath no ſure unſhaken foundation, but in the love and fear of the one true God: that love, which extends its benign influence to all the creatures of God. This is a branch of that benevolent religion, which the Son of God came down from Heaven to eſtabliſh, in the hearts of men on earth: this when ſeated in the ſoul of man, becomes a ſtable principle of action, and will have an habitual influence in all his conduct, whether in public or private life—this will enable rulers to maintain the dignity of their elevated ſtations, amidſt the ſtrong temptations with which they may be aſſaulted—feeling their juſt accountableneſs to thoſe of their fellow men, who have placed ſuch confidence in them, as to entruſt them with all their valuable temporal intereſts: and what is infinitely more, feeling their accountableneſs to God; they will labor to diſcharge the important duties of their office; remembering that the day is faſt approaching,

† Iſa. iii, 4, 5, and lix: 14, 15.

when, notwithſtanding, "they are gods, and children of the Moſt High, yet they ſhall die like men, an fall like one of the princes." Able pious magiſtrates, who wiſh to anſwer the end of their appointment, will not wiſh to hide their real characters from the public eye—they will come to the light that their deeds may be manifeſt.

It is the intereſt and privilege of an enlightened free people, to be acquainted with the characters of their moſt worthy citizens, who are candidates for public offices in the community; and, it is equally their intereſt and privilege, to make choice of thoſe only to be rulers, who are known among their tribes, for wiſdom and piety. Following the ſalutary counſel of the prince of Midian, they will provide out of all the people, able men, ſuch as fear God, men of truth, hating covetouſneſs.

Free republicans, as obſerved above, have it in their power to be governed well: but they are in the utmoſt danger through a wanton abuſe of this power. Actuated, by noble public ſpirited motives, and a primary regard to real merit in their elections; they will have the heads of their tribes, as fathers to lead them in paths of ſafety and peace: under the guidance of ſuch rulers, who conſider their ſubjects as brethren, and children, and all the intereſts of the community as their own; a people can hardly fail of all that happineſs of which ſocieties are capable in this degenerate ſtate.

But when party ſpirit, local views, and intereſted motives, direct their ſuffrages, when

they loose sight of the great end of government the public good, and give themselves up, to the baneful influence of parasitical demagogues, they may well expect to reap the bitter fruits of their own folly, in a partial wavering administration. Through the neglect, or abuse of their privileges, most states have lost their liberties; and have fallen a prey to the avarice and ambition of designing and wicked men. "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." This joy, or mourning, among a people, greatly depends on their own conduct in elections—bribery here, is the bane of society—the man who will give or receive a reward in this case, must be extremely ignorant, not to deserve the stigma of an enemy to the state—and should he have address to avoid discovery, he must be destitute of sensibility, not to feel himself to be despicable. All private dishonorable methods to raise persons to office, convey a strong suspicion to the discerning mind, that merit is wanting: real merit may dwell in obscurity, but it needeth not, neither will it ever solicit, the aids of corruption to bring itself into view. When streams are polluted in their fountain they will not fail to run impure—offices in government obtained by purchase, will always be improved to regain the purchase money with large increase: and a venal administration will possess neither disposition nor strength to correct the vices of others, but will lose sight of the public happiness, in the eager pursuit of personal emolument.

4. WISDOM will lead a people to maintain a ſacred regard to righteouſneſs, in reference to the public, and individuals.

MORAL righteouſneſs is one of thoſe ſtrong bonds by which all public ſocieties are ſupported. Heathen nations ignorant of divine revelation, and the particular duties and obligations which are enlightened and inforced by the word and authority of GOD; have nevertheleſs been ſenſible, of the great importance of moral righteouſneſs. Greece and Rome, in the beginning of their greatneſs, before they ſunk into effeminacy and corruption, were careful to encourage and maintain public and private juſtice: they laboured to diffuſe principles of righteouſneſs among all ranks of their citizens. Many of their writings on this ſubject, deſerve attention ſo far as the obſervance of moral duties reſpect civil communities, and the well-being of mankind in the preſent world. As all civil communities have their foundation in compacts, by which individuals immerge out of a ſtate of nature, and become one great whole, cemented together by voluntary engagements; covenanting with each other, to obſerve ſuch regulations, and perform ſuch duties as may tend to mutual advantage: hence ariſeth the neceſſity of righteouſneſs, this being the baſis on which all muſt depend. When this fails, compacts will be diſregarded, men will looſe a ſenſe of their obligations to each other, inſtead of confidence and harmony, will be a ſpirit of diſtruſt and fear, every man will be afraid of his neighbour; jealouſies will ſubſiſt betwixt rulers and ſubjects, the ſtrength of

the community will be loſt in animoſity and diviſion, all ability for united exertion will be deſtroyed, and, the bonds of ſociety being broken it muſt be diſſolved. It was long ſince obſerved, by one of the greateſt and wiſeſt of kings, and will for ever remain true; "That righteouſneſs exalteth a nation: but ſin is a reproach to any people." The truth of this divine maxim doth not depend upon any arbitrary conſtitution, or, poſitive ſyſtem of government: but flows from the reaſon and nature of things.

THERE is in the conſtitution of heaven, an eſtabliſhed connection, between the practice of righteouſneſs and the happineſs of moral beings united in ſociety. Public faith, and private juſtice, lay a foundation, for public ſpirit and vigorous exertion to reſt upon; in ſuch a ſtate, every one will receive a proper reward for his ſervice, let his ſtation be what it may: and every delinquent, will realize ſuch puniſhment, as his offence, or neglect of duty may deſerve. In a fixed regular courſe of communicative and diſtributive juſtice, all may know before hand, what the reward of their conduct will be. What the apoſtle hath ſaid concerning the natural body, and applied to the church of CHRIST: may with equal propriety and little variation, be applied to political ſocieties. Theſe bodies are compoſed of various members, the members have various offices, but all of them are neceſſary, for the well being of the whole; there is ſomething due from the body to every member, and from every member to the body: every part is to be regarded,

and righteouſneſs maintained throughout the whole.

THE members of a well organized civil community, under an equal and juſt adminiſtration, have no more reaſon to complain of the ſtation alloted to them in providence; than the members of the natural body, have of the place, by GOD aſſigned them in that. "The eye cannot ſay unto the head, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to to the feet, I have no need of you. But that the members ſhould have the ſame care one for another. And whether one member ſuffer, all the members ſuffer with it: or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." No member of the natural body, of a civil community, or of GOD's moral kingdom, can be required to do more, than obſerve the proper duty of its own ſtation: when this is performed, all is done which can reaſonably be demanded, it hath done well, and may expect the approbation and protection of the whole body.

MEN may indeed complain, becauſe they are not angels; and do it with as much propriety, as to feel diſcontented, becauſe they are not all placed at the head of civil communities. The allwiſe GOD, hath given us our capacities, and fixed our ſtations, and when righteouſneſs is obſerved by us, and the community of which we are members, we ſhall then do, and receive, what belongs to us, and this is all we can reaſonably deſire.

5. THE wiſdom of a people eſſentially conſiſts, in paying an unfeigned obedience to the

inſtitutions of that religion, which the Supreme Lawgiver hath eſtabliſhed in his church on earth.

THAT religion, which GOD hath enjoined upon rational beings, is not only neceſſary for his glory, but eſſential to their happineſs. To eſtabliſh a character as being truly religious, under the light of divine revelation, it is by no means ſufficient, that men ſhould barely acknowledge the exiſtence, and general providence of one ſupreme DEITY. From this heavenly light, we obtain decided evidence, that the Almighty Father, hath ſet his well beloved Son the bleſſed IMMANUEL, as King upon his holy hill of Zion. This DIVINE perſon, in his mediatorial character, "is exalted, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but alſo, in that which is to come. And all things are put under his feet. That at the name of JESUS, every knee ſhould bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue ſhould confeſs, that JESUS CHRIST is LORD, to the glory of GOD the Father."

IN vain, do guilty mortals worſhip the great Jehovah, and preſent their ſervices before him, but, in the name, and for the ſake of this glorious Mediator. For it is his will "that all men ſhould honor the Son, even as they honor the Father."

COMMUNITIES, have their exiſtence in, and from, this glorious perſonage. The kingdom is his, and he ruleth among the nations.

Through his bounty, and ſpecial providence, it is, that a people enjoy the ineſtimable liberties and numerous advantages of a well regulated civil ſociety: through his influence, they are inſpired with underſtanding to adopt, with ſtrength and public ſpirit to maintain, a righteous conſtitution: HE gives able impartial rulers, to guide in paths of virtue and peace; or ſets up over them the baſeſt of men. By his inviſible hand, ſtates are preſerved from internal convulſions, and ſhielded by his Almighty arm from external violence: or, through his providential diſpleaſure, they are given as a prey to their own vices; or to the luſts and paſſions of other ſtates, to be deſtroyed.

THUS abſolutely dependant, are temporal communities, and all human things, upon HIM who reigneth King in Zion. "Be wiſe now therefore, O ye kings; be inſtructed, ye judges of the earth. Kiſs the Son leſt he be angry, and ye periſh from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little: bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him."

THE holy religion of the Son of GOD, hath a moſt powerful and benign influence upon moral beings in ſociety. It not only reſtrains malicious revengeful paſſions, and curbs unruly luſts; but will in event, eradicate them all from the human breaſt—it implants all the divine graces and ſocial virtues in the heart—it ſweetens the diſpoſitions of men, and fits them for all the pleaſing ſatisfactions, of rational friendſhip—teaches them ſelf denial—inſpires them with a generous public ſpirit—fills them

with love to others, to righteouſneſs and mercy —makes them careful to diſcharge the duties of their ſtations—diligent and contented in their callings—this, beyond any other conſideration, will increaſe the real dignity of rulers—will give quiet and ſubmiſſion to ſubjects—this is the only true and genuine ſpirit of liberty, which can give abiding union and energy to ſtates—and will enable them to bear proſperity without pride—and ſupport them in adverſity without dejection—this will afford all claſſes of men conſolation in death, and render them happy in GOD, their full eternal portion, in the coming world.

RELIGION, therefore is the glory of all intelligent beings, from the higheſt angel, to the meaneſt of the human race: and will for ever happify its poſſeſſors, conſidered, either individually, or, as connected in ſociety: for this aſſimulates the hearts of creatures, to the great fountain of being in the exerciſe of general and diſintereſted affection; and is, the conſumation of wiſdom.

IF the preceding obſervations, have their foundation in reaſon, and the word of GOD: we ſee the happy connection between religion and good government. The idea that there is, and ought to be, no connection between religion and civil policy, appears to reſt upon this abſurd ſuppoſition; that men by entering into ſociety for mutual advantage, become quite a different claſs of beings from what they were before, that they ceaſe to be moral beings; and conſequently, looſe their relation and obli-

gations to GOD, as his creatures and ſubjects: and alſo their relations to each other as rational ſocial creatures. If theſe are the real conſequences of civil connections, they are unhappy indeed, as they muſt exceedingly debaſe and degrade human nature: and it is readily acknowledged, theſe things being true, that religion can have no further demands upon them. But, if none of the relations or obligations of men to their Creator, and each other are loſt by entering into ſociety; if they ſtill remain moral and accountable beings, and, if religion is the glory and perfection of moral beings, then the connection, between religion and good government is evident—and all attempts to ſeparate them are unfriendly to ſociety, and inimical to good government, and muſt originate in ignorance or bad deſign.

RELIGION eſſentially conſiſts in friendly affection to GOD, and his rational offspring; and ſuch affection, can never injure that government which hath public happineſs for its object.

ATTEMPTS have been made to diſtinguiſh between moral and political wiſdom—moral and political righteouſneſs—as tho there were two kinds of wiſdom and righteouſneſs, diſtinct in their nature, and applicable only to different ſubjects: that which is moral, belonging to the government of men as ſubjects of GOD's dominion; and that which is political, to men as jubjects of civil rule—But, if wiſdom and righteouſneſs, are the ſame in the fountain, as in the ſtreams, in GOD, as in his creatures; differ-

ing not in nature and kind, but only in degree, then all ſuch diſtinctions are manifeſtly without foundation. We read it is true, of a particular kind of wiſdom, the fruit of which is "bitter envying and ſtrife and every evil work: and that this wiſdom, is earthly, ſenſual, and deviliſh." But, until it is made to appear, that this is more friendly to civil government, than the wiſdom "from above, which is pure and peaceable, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſy:"* the ſuppoſed diſtinction, will not apply to human governments with advantage—nor, deſtroy the connection between religion and good government.

Religion and civil government, are not one and the ſame thing: tho' both may, and are deſigned to embrace ſome of the ſame objects, yet the former, extends its obligations and deſigns immenſely beyond what the latter can pretend too: and it hath rights and prerogatives, with which the latter may not intermeddle. Still, there are many ways, in which civil government may give countenance, encouragement, and even ſupport to religion, without invading the prerogatives of the Moſt High; or, touching the inferior, tho ſacred rights of conſcience: and in doing of which, it may not only ſhew its friendly regard to chriſtianity, but derive important advantages to itſelf.

This friends of true happineſs, whether miniſters of ſtate, or miniſters of religion, or, in what ever character they may act, will therefore

* Jam. xiv.—18

exert themſelves to promote that cauſe, which aims at no leſs an object, than the glory of JEHOVAH, and the higheſt felicity of his unlimited and eternal kingdom.

A CIVIL community, formed, organized, and adminiſtered, agreeably to the principles which have been ſuggeſted, will poſſeſs internal peace and energy; its ſtrength and wealth may eaſily be collected for neceſſary defence, conſequently will ever be prepared to repel foreign injuries: it will enjoy proſperity within itſelf, and become reſpectable amongſt the nations of the earth.

COULD this, and the other ſtates in the American Republic in their ſeparate and united capacities, be eſtabliſhed upon the principles of true wiſdom, that righteouſneſs and goodneſs, which have their foundation in the nature of things, and are eſſential parts, of the chriſtian ſyſtem—could we build upon this foundation, we might ſet forth a good example, and become a bleſſing to mankind—in this way we might eſtabliſh our character as a wiſe and underſtanding people—become * "beautiful as Tirzah, comely as Jeruſalem"—we ſhould "look forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the ſun, and terrible as an army with banners."

THOSE deſerve well of their brethren, who have devoted their time and ſuperior abilities to the public, in the eſtabliſhment and adminiſtration of civil conſtitutions, which are calculated to anſwer purpoſes, importantly beneficial to mankind.

* Solomons Song vi. 4. and 10.

THESE thoughts, may call our grateful attention, to the honourable and venerable characters, collected this morning in the houſe of GOD. Some reſpectful, ſerious addreſſes, to the different characters here preſent may conclude this diſcourſe.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

SEATS of dignity in free republics are truly honorable, where merit, and the voice of uncorrupted citizens are the only cauſes of elevation. The firſt Magiſtrate in ſuch a ſtate, is more reſpectable than the moſt powerful Monarch, who obtains his throne, either by arbitrary uſurpation, the arts of venality, or even the fortunate circumſtance of hereditary ſucceſſion. In either of the inſtances ſuppoſed, the throne may be filled without perſonal worth, may be ſupported by the ſame means by which it was at firſt obtained, and may be improved for the purpoſes of idleneſs and diſſipation: or what is worſe, to conſume the wealth, deſtroy the liberties, and even ſport with the lives of ſubjects. By means of ſuch abuſe of power, a people will be rendered vaſtly more wretched, than they would have been in a ſtate of nature; and yet find it extremely difficult, to extricate themſelves from theſe complicated evils. But ſuch abuſe of power cannot ſo eaſily take place, or be continued, in free republican governments; where places of honor are inſeparably connected with important duties; duties which muſt be performed, otherwiſe ſuch places will not long be ſupported, under the jealous inſpection of a people, poſſeſſed of the knowledge,

and love of liberty, together with the means of its preſervation.

THESE conſiderations, add to the merit, and increaſe the luſtre of thoſe worthy characters, which have been repeatedly called by the united voice of their brethren to preſide in this State. The underſtanding of this people and their knowledge of worth, have been conſpicuous, in the attention generally paid, to deſerving perſonages in the election of their rulers: eſpecially in the long ſucceſſion of wiſe religious governors, whoſe eminent talents, and pious examples, have been ſo extenſively beneficial to this community. May your Excellency's name, in this honourable catalogue, remain a laſting memorial, of the many ſervices which you have rendered to this people, as a public teſtimony of the reſpect of your enlightened fellow citizens: and may your unremitted exertions for their proſperity be continued, and all your benevolent endeavours to promote their temporal and eternal intereſts, meet the divine bleſſing—may you never bear that ſword in vain, which the exalted MEDIATOR, through the inſtrumentality of men, hath put into your hand; let this be a ſhield to the innocent, the widow, and the orphan, in their oppreſſions; while it remains a terror, to all ſuch as do evil: you will if poſſible, ſcatter the wicked with your eyes, but when coercion becomes neceſſary, you will bring the wheel over them. Senſible of the weighty cares, and ſtrong temptations of your exalted ſtation, may your dependance, be increaſingly fixed on that glorious and gracious Being, who hath called you to office; eſteem-

ing his approbation infinitely ſuperior to the applauſe of mortals. By the weight of your example, and the influence of that authority with which you are clothed, may you, ſir, do much for the honor of GOD the Redeemer, for the advancement of his holy religion among men—for the promotion of righteouſneſs and peace, in this, and the United States of America—for the abolition of ſlavery and every ſpecies of oppreſſion—for the increaſe of civil and religious liberty, in the earth—And when, by the Supreme Diſpoſer of all events, you may be called, to relinquiſh the honors, and cares of this mortal life, our prayer to Almighty GOD, is, that in that ſolemn hour, you may enjoy the ſupports of conſcious integrity, meet with the approbation of your Judge, and be graciouſly received to the ſociety of the bleſſed.

THE public addreſs, may now, be reſpectfully preſented, to his Honor the Lieutenant-Governor, the Council, and Houſe of Repreſentatives.

HONORED GENTLEMEN,

THE truſt, which GOD, and this reſpectable commonwealth, have repoſed in you is truly important. All the temporal intereſts of this people, in a ſenſe, are put into your hands and committed to your management, for the general good. Children place ſtrong confidence, in the wiſdom and tender care of their natural parents; ſo, do this people in you, gentlemen, as their civil fathers: this confidence is not only implied, but expreſſed, in the deſignation

of your perſons to thoſe offices which you hold, in the government of your fellow citizens. Civil liberty, is an inheritance deſcending from the Father of Lights, a talent which, individuals may not deſpiſe, or miſimprove without guilt: how vaſtly important then, muſt this, with its connected bleſſings in ſociety, be, to a large community? The extenſive views, and patriotic feelings, of wiſe and virtuous magiſtrates, cannot fail, deeply to impreſs their minds with the weight and ſolemnity of the truſt repoſed in them. Great anxiety for preferment, betrays a weak mind, or a vicious heart. Thoſe only, deſerve the honors of an elevated ſtation, who are willing to bear the burdens, and perform the duties which belong to it: and to reap the rewards which righteouſneſs and benevolence will beſtow: and who, in the ways of well doing, can meet with calmneſs, the temporary ingratitude, of a miſguided misjudging people. Not that the preacher would be underſtood to mean, that great eſteem, with an ample pecuniary recompenſe, are not due, to thoſe, whoſe time, and ſuperior talents are employed, in promoting the happineſs of their fellow men.

You, gentlemen, are veſted with an authority, which men of wiſdom and virtue will ever revere; which properly exerciſed, none can reſiſt, without reſiſting the ordinance of God: and perſevering in their reſiſtance "muſt receive to themſelves damnation." May you ever exerciſe ſuch authority, in the meekneſs of wiſdom, for the beſt good of your brethren: agreeably to thoſe unchangeable laws of righte-

ouſneſs and goodneſs, which the Supreme Lawgiver hath eſtabliſhed in his moral kingdom.* "That no iniquity, be found in the place of righteouſneſs, or, wickedneſs, in the place of judgment; your eyes will be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with you: thoſe who walk in a perfect way," will be deſignated by you for all important executive truſts. Viewing yourſelves, in the light of truth, as the miniſters of GOD, to this people for good, you will realize the important connection between the moral government of JEHOVAH, and thoſe inferior governments which he hath ordained to exiſt among men. In this light, you will eſteem it your higheſt glory, to manifeſt a perſonal, ſupreme regard, to the benevolent inſtitutions of the Son of GOD: by the weight of your example, and the force of all that influence you poſſeſs, you will ſtudy to commend his holy religion to all men; that you may be inſtrumental, in promoting the temporal peace and eternal happineſs of this people. Public ſentiments have a vaſt influence upon the conduct of mankind; public ſentiments receive their complexion from public men; the rulers of a people can do more than ſome may imagine, to promote real godlineſs: if this, is recommended in their converſation, and exemplified in their lives, it will attract the attention of multitudes; it may lead ſome to a happy imitation, and will not fail, to give ſtrong ſupport, to all the friends of GOD. But men, ſufficiently diſpoſed at all times to caſt off the fear of GOD, need ſlender aid, from public influential characters, to become pro-

* Eccl. iii. 16—Pſ. ci. 6.

ſeſſed advocates, for infidelity and licentiouſneſs. How exceedingly intereſting, gentlemen, to yourſelves and the community, is the ſtation aſſigned you in providence? May unerring wiſdom guide all your ſteps, and the God of Abraham be your ſhield, and exceeding great reward.

THE Miniſters of GOD's ſanctuary, will accept ſome thoughts addreſſed to them, not indeed for their inſtruction, but, to "ſtir up their pure minds by way of remembrance."

REVEREND FATHERS and BRETHREN,

OUR character as chriſtians, obligeth us to be righteous before GOD, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs: not forgetting that, of civil magiſtracy, as one of the wiſe and gracious appointments of heaven, which, rightly improved, will extend its happy influence beyond the preſent life. And, our office as miniſters, calleth us to exhort all the diſciples of Jeſus, that they "ſubmit themſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake: unto kings and governors as unto them that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well. For ſo is the will of GOD, that with well doing ye may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men." The ignorance and folly of that principle, that there is no connection between religion and civil policy, is moſt happily refuted, when the followers of JESUS act in character, and demonſtrate to the world, that real chriſtians are the beſt members of ſociety in every ſtation. We are not then acting out

of character, when pointing out the advantages of a righteous government, and the neceſſity of ſubjection to magiſtrates. This however, is not the principal object of our miniſtry: our wiſdom and underſtanding will eminently appear, in converting ſinners from the error of their ways—in winning ſouls to CHRIST. To effect which our ſpeech and our preaching muſt not be with enticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the ſpirit and of power.

CONTENDING, in the unerring wiſdom, and boundleſs goodneſs, of GOD, we need not be aſhamed, nor afraid, to declare all his counſel—being well aſſured, that no doctrine, or duty, can be found in his revealed will, but ſuch as are profitable for men to believe and practice. The great comprehenſive deſign of the chriſtian miniſtry, is the glory of GOD, in the ſalvation of ſinners, through JESUS CHRIST. In purſuing this noble all important deſign, we ſhall labor to exhibit, the divine excellency of the chriſtian religion, in the holineſs of our lives and converſation, as well, as in the ſimplicity, and uncorruptneſs of our doctrines: that our example and our preaching, may unite in their tendency, to perſuade ſinners, to become reconciled to GOD. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publiſheth peace, that ſaith unto Zion, thy GOD reigneth!" and how is this beauty increaſed! when the ſpiritual watchmen upon the walls of Zion, "ſing together, with the voice, and ſee eye to eye."*

*Iſa. lii. 7. 8.

That this beauty may appear and shine, in all the ministers and churches of Christ; let us become more fervent, and united, in supplications, to our Father in Heaven, that he may shed forth plentiful effusions of that spirit of love, and of a sound mind, which is the only abiding principle of union, between moral beings. Under the influence of this holy spirit, awakened to activity and renewed diligence, by the repeated instances of mortality, among the ministering servants of God, in the past year; may we all pursue the sacred work assigned us, with increasing joy, and success, until called from our labors, to receive the free rewards of faithful servants, in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

A brief address, to the numerous audience present on this joyful anniversary, will close this discourse.—

Brethren and fellow Citizens,

Let us not vainly boast, in our truly happy constitution—nor in the number of wise, and pious personages, whom God hath called to preside in its administration. We have abundant occasion indeed, to bless, and praise, the God of Heaven; for all our distinguishing privileges, both civil and religious—few of our lapsed race, enjoy immunities, equal to those which we possess: but we do well to remember, that profaneness and irreligion, infidelity and ungodliness, when connected with such advantages, will exceedingly enhance the guilt of men, and without repentance will awfully increase the

pains of damnation. Would we become a wiſe underſtanding people, we muſt learn the ſtatutes, and judgments, which the LORD our GOD, hath commanded, and obey them—we muſt be a religious, holy people, "for without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the LORD." Let all be exhorted, to become wiſe to ſalvation, through faith, which is in CHRIST JESUS.—AMEN.

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